

ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF TURKEY

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Bulletin Editors:

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THE LATEST REPORT

With the 1970-73 Report out of the way, work has started on that for 1974-75 and Mark Beaman hopes that the systematic list will be completed by the late Spring which bodes well for an Autumn publication.

A few copies of the 1970-73 Report are still available and can be obtained, price £3.00 from Peter Clement, Hon. Treasurer, 80 Coverts Road, Claygate, Esher, Surrey, England.

RECORDS FOR 1976 AND 1977

Though the publication of this report is a long way off we are collecting records and are grateful to the many observers who have already submitted notes for 1976.

Records should be sent to the Hon. Recorder, OST, c/o RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, England.

Please write on ONE SIDE of paper only and use the following layout.

STERNA HIRUNDO - (ARK - observers initials)

W. Anatolia (Region) - 18th July 1976 - Apolyant Golu - Colony of 20 pairs.

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

The next A.G.M. will be on Thursday 2nd June 1977 in London and details are enclosed with this Bulletin

SURVEY OF BREEDING WHITE STORKS BY TURKISH SCHOOLCHILDREN

White storks Ciconia ciconia breed throughout much of Turkey but have their main concentration in the western half of the country. It is a familiar bird which has a close association with man, frequently breeding on rooftops in villages and towns. It is possible that Turkey has one of the highest breeding densities of white storks in any country of the world, and therefore it has an international responsibility to protect them.

The Pilot survey

Recognising this responsibility, the Turkish Wildlife Protection Society - Dogal Hayati Koruma Dernegi - launched in 1976 a project to count nesting white storks with the help of schoolchildren. In the first year just the schools of Thrace (European Turkey) were contacted, and each was a brochure on the white stork plus a questionnaire on which they had to state, for their town or village, the number of storks nests present, both occupied and unoccupied. In addition they were asked for information on other species present including pheasant Phasianus colchicus, Fox Vulpes vulpes, Wolf Canis lupus, and Jackal Canis aureus.

This pilot project in Thrace has proved most successful and of 1440 schools circularized, already 378 have sent replies. 199 contained positive information and a total of 1962 nests were reported, 1471 of which were occupied. As with all enquiries of this nature it will, of course, be necessary to carry out independent sample surveys to assess the reliability of the counts.

Plans for the future

Many administrative problems have now been solved by this pilot scheme, and the Dogal Hayati Koruma Dernegi wish to extend the survey to cover Asian Turkey and plan, providing funds can be raised, to carry out this work during 1977 and 1978.

The pilot scheme has cost approximately £610 of which D.H.K.D. contributed £210 and I.C.B.P. (through the generosity of Dr. Hoffmann) £400.

To continue the survey in Asian Turkey further leaflets and questionnaires will need to be printed and mailed to about 40,000 schools, and it is estimated that this will cost in the region of £4,000. The Turks hope to raise £2,000. and the remaining £2,000 is being sought from international or foreign conservation organizations. The O.S.T.'s Constitution does not allow it to become involved in conservation projects in Turkey, but we do feel that individually members may like to contribute to this important and imaginative scheme which will introduce many Turkish children to Wildlife conservation. If so, donations should be sent to W.H.N. Wilkinson, c/o Kleinwort Benson, 20 Fenchurch Street, London. EC3 3DB, who is arranging the appeal to support this venture in Britain.

A 'NEW' RAPTOR MIGRATION ROUTE THROUGH N.E. TURKEY

Although it has been known for some time that quite large numbers of raptors migrate around the eastern end of the Black sea, following observations by Jahme (1965 - Beitr. z. Vogelkde, 10:348-352) and Kumerloev (1967 - Beitr. Z. Vogelkde. 13:29-32), the sheer enormity of the movement has only recently become apparent. Following observations by Dave Flumm and Nick Lord at Ardesen in August/September 1973, when over 32,000 Honey Buzzards Pernis apivorus, were recorded plus small numbers of other species, a team of British observers spent most of the Autumn of 1976 counting in N.E. Turkey at Arhavi and Borcka.

Arhavi is a small township on the Black Sea coast near Hopa, whilst Borcka lies a little inland in the Coruh valley. We chose these two watch-points because of their strategic position near to the Eastern end of the Black Sea coast, an area in which birds should be heavily concentrated in Autumn, after moving southwards along /

the Russian coast, before spreading out across Turkey. As events showed, we made a fortunate decision, and over the course of the season (17th August- 10th October) c.370,000 raptors of 28 species were counted, a staggering total even compared to the Bosphorus or the Straits of Gibraltar. At the latter the maximum totals ever recorded are c.76,000 and c.189,000 respectively. Broken down into its components the 1976 totals consisted of c.138,000 Honey Buzzards, c.205,000 Steppe Buzzards Buteo buteo vulpinus (perhaps including some menetriesi?), 5,775 Black Kites Milvus migrans, 290 Levant Sparrowhawks Accipiter brevipes, 688 Sparrowhawks A. nisus, 473 Booted Eagles Hieraaetus pennatus, 271 Steppe Eagles aquila nipatensis, 736 Lesser Spotted Eagles A. pomarina, 243 Short-toed Eagles Circus gallicus, 133 Pallid Harriers Circus macrourus, 124 montagu's Harriers C. pygargus, 385 Marsh Harriers C. aeruginosus, 189 Hobbies Falco subbuteo and smaller numbers of Ospreys Pandion haliaetus (24), Goshawks A. gentiles (15), Long-legged Buzzards Buteo rufinus (5), Spotted Eagles A. clanga (21), Imperial Eagles A. heliaca (3), Golden Eagles A. chrysaetos (3 - ? migrating), White-tailed Eagles Haliaetus albicilla (1), Hen Harriers C. cyaneus (8), Egyptian Vultures Neophron percnopterus (5), Griffon Vultures Gyps fulvus (2), Sakers F. cherrug (12), Peregrines F. peregrinus (8 - ? migrating), Red-footed Falcons F. vespertinus (23), Lesser Kestrels F. naumanni (47) and Kestrels F. tinnunculus (30). In addition to birds specifically identified there were a further 26,000 or so unidentified raptors, most of which were almost certainly P. apivorus or B. buteo, but including 159 Accipiter sp., 505 Aquila sp., 716 Circus sp. and 433 Falco sp. (mostly naumanni/tinnunculus).

These totals show some interesting differences when compared with those recorded at the Bosphorus. The huge total of Buzzards is perhaps understandable in view of the highly migratory behaviour of vulpinus compared with the nominate race. The populations in the catchment area of the Bosphorus route are racially intermediate and are, on average, less migratory than those further east. Range considerations can also account for the low numbers of Levant Sparrowhawks, Lesser Spotted Eagles and Egyptian Vultures in N. E. Turkey, since all three species have restricted distributions to the north of this area. Similarly the appearance of Steppe Eagles as a significant component of the movements there follows from the distribution in the U.S.S.R. Other totals are perhaps more surprising. The enormous numbers of Honey Buzzards, greatly in excess of those recorded at the Bosphorus (and Princes Islands), but not far above totals recorded at the Straits of Gibraltar, suggests that many of these birds may be crossing the Sea of Marmara to the west of the Bosphorus, (probably in company with large numbers of white Storks Ciconia ciconia), since on geographic grounds there is no reason to suppose that the numbers using the Bosphorus/Marmara route are really so low. The low total of Short-toed Eagles is unexpected, but it is possible that densities are lower in extreme eastern Europe and W. Siberia. The total of only 2 Griffon Vultures is a further difference from the Bosphorus, but passage may well

have continued after we stopped counting on the 10th October. (This may also apply to species such as A. nipalensis and C. gallicus). Harriers and falcons of several species were surprisingly common in N. E. Turkey, so it may be that the coast was used to some extent as a useful leading line even by these broad-front migrants.

With such large movements involved, counting was exhausting to put it mildly. Matters were not helped by the local topography, which required a climb of 750-850 metres every morning in order to stagger up to the hill-tops over which the raptors moved, nor by the dozens of shooters and sparrowhawk trappers who resented our presence in full view of their hides, or by the appalling weather in early autumn (seemingly endless rain). The compensations were well worth all the effort, however, and on a glorious day with the birds streaming past low overhead, or against the brilliant icy peaks of the Pontic range, one could almost forget that one's eyes felt as if they'd been sand-papered by hours of staring into a glaring sky.

In the early part of the season most movement was along the coast itself, with large numbers of Honey Buzzards and Black Kites passing southwestwards over Arhavi even in light rain. Later, once the Buzzards and large Eagles became predominant, the greatest movements were through the Coruh valley south-southwestwards over Borcka - a surprising dichotomy in such a limited area. Weather conditions did not seem to play any primary role in this difference, but it is possible that a traditional movement by Honey Buzzards and Black Kites along the slightly longer coastal route has developed due to persistent low cloud and rain blocking off the Coruh valley route in early autumn. Under such conditions passage can still continue at low altitudes along the coast and it may be that a pattern has been formed so that even in fine weather these species pass largely along the coastal route.

So many days produced massive totals that it is difficult to single out particularly memorable occasions, but the 4th of September and 28th of September were by far the most extraordinary. On the 4th some 44,000 raptors, including 37,000 or so Honey Buzzards, were recorded at Arhavi, whilst on the 28th after a period of heavy rain stopped migration for over a day, some 137,000 raptors, including 135,000 or so Buzzards, passed over Borcka. Regarding the latter occasion, mere words cannot describe the awesome impression that it had on us all as the spirals seethed past us for hour after hour, keeping five people hopelessly overworked trying to keep pace with them. It is not often that raptors cannot be counted individually, but this day was certainly one of them and the actual total of birds passing us can only be guessed at - probably it was even higher than our totals for the day.

After such an Autumn it is tempting to sit back with one's memories, but there is still a great deal to be discovered in the area, especially as regards movements along the river valleys further to the east (e.g. the Kura, Kars and Aras), and we are hoping to arrange a team to count in the area in 1977. Any offers of help will be warmly appreciated, even

if you can only come for a week or two. The area is a simple, if lengthy (24 hours), bus journey from Istanbul and well worth the extra effort. Anyone contemplating going this year should contact Mark Beaman, Culterty Field Station, Newburgh, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, U. K.

John Andrews, Mark Beaman, Paul Fisher, Tony Hereward, Martin Heubeck, Maire Morton, Richard Porter, and Phil Round.

(Footnote: Although storks are not included in the title of this article, it seems worth mentioning that no White Storks and only 79 Black Storks *C. nigra* were recorded in N.E. Turkey in 1976. The lack of White Storks is understandable in view of the range of the species, but the scarcity of Black Storks is very surprising. Evidence is really too slim to allow speculation as to the cause of this scarcity, but it may be that densities are very low to the north.)

WINTER BIRDS IN KARADENIZ-EREGLI. 1976 - 1977.

By J. S. M. Albrecht.

Karadeniz-Eregli is a steel town on the shores of the Black Sea 250 kilometres east of Istanbul. It is an hour's drive across the mountains from Duzce on the main E5 road. The limestone hills come right down to the sea and form quite impressive cliffs to the north-east of the town. The hills are cultivated wherever possible, mainly for vegetables with cereals and pasture. Hazel nuts are also an important crop. Otherwise the hills are covered with deciduous woods and scrub.

The most noticeable thing about Eregli in mid-October, on arrival from Southern England, was the small number of birds to be seen. There were no thrushes and few tits or finches. However the Autumn migration was still very much in evidence. A Spotted flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*) was seen on the 16th and there were small numbers of *Phylloscopus* warblers. Only the Chiffchaff (*P. collybita*) was identified. Resident birds included small numbers (less than 10) of Grey and White wagtails (*Motacilla cinerea*, *M. alba*), Jays (*Garrulus glandarius*), Great tits (*Parus major*) and Chaffinches (*Fringilla coelebs*) and larger numbers of Jackdaws (*Corvus monedula*), Hooded crows (*C. corone*) and Goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*). The Magpie (*Pica pica*), although common across the mountains towards Istanbul, appears to be absent from this area. On the 29th a Jack snipe (*Limnospiza minima*) was flushed from a damp hill near the sea, 220 Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) moved south and 2 Stonechats (*Saxicola torquata*) and 4 Redstarts (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*) were seen. Robins (*Erithacus rubecula*) were also moving. On the sea there were 30 Black-necked grebes (*Podiceps nigricollis*) and 4 Great crested grebes (*P. cristatus*). Also present were 180 Black-headed gulls (*Larus ridibundus*), 4 Herring and a Mediterranean gull (*L. argentatus*, *L. melanocephalus*) and a Sandwich tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*).

The only raptors seen during the Winter were a Kestrel (probably *Falco tinnunculus*) on 29th October and up to 3 Sparrow hawks (*Accipiter nisus*) and at least 2 Buzzards (*Buteo buteo*), which were seen from time to time.

The migration continued into November with at least 20 Robins seen on the 6th. During the first week 2 Lesser white-throats (*Sylvia curruca*), a Stonechat, a Black redstart (*Phoenicurus ochrurus*) and at least 20 Bramblings (*Fringilla montifringilla*) in a flock of 400 Chaffinches were also seen. The first Rooks (*Corvus frugilegus*) were recorded at this time. Other birds 'discovered' in November were Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) and Greenfinch (*Carduelis chloris*), all in small numbers.

The weather was warm and sunny for most of November with southerly or westerly winds. But on the 24th it suddenly turned very cold with continuous rain and sleet. On the 27th there were at least 1200 Black-headed gulls in the bay and a sea watch produced 2 Sandwich terns and the first Little and Lesser Black-backed gulls (*Larus minutus*, *L. fuscus*) of the Winter.

About 10 kilometres from Ereğli a river has been dammed to form a reservoir. The lake is deep and has a muddy bottom and, apart from Little grebes (*Podiceps ruficollis*), no water birds have been seen on it. The surrounding hills are more interesting. A pair of Ravens (*Corvus corax*) are frequently seen and Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*), Long-tailed tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*) and Blue tit (*Parus caeruleus*) were first seen here. In December the first Blackbirds (*Turdus merula*) were seen on the 19th along with Firecrests (*Regulus ignicapillus*) and Reed buntings (*Emberiza schoeniclus*). In January a Great egret (*Egretta alba*) and 4 Green sandpipers (*Tringa ochropus*) were seen by the now empty lake and in February the number of Grey herons (*Ardea cinerea*) had increased to 14.

Also of interest is a shallow river that runs into the sea about 15 kilometres west of Ereğli. On Christmas Day a Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), a Meadow pipit (*Athus pratensis*), 7 Water pipits (*A. spinoletta*), 4 Grey and 20 White wagtails were feeding along it.

At sea, bird numbers remained low throughout December with 53 Tufted duck (*Aythya fuligula*) on the 25th being the only interest. January was more interesting with Great crested grebes reaching a maximum of 70 on the 23rd. 2 Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*), one of which was shot, were seen along the coast. In the second week a female Tufted duck and 2 juvenile Goldeneyes (*Bucephala clangula*) appeared off a sewage outfall. 3 Coots (*Fulica atra*) were seen on the 2nd. Gulls were also of interest with up to 10 Mediterranean, 4 Little and 300 Black-headed gulls seen in rough weather. Herring gulls never exceeded 15 but Common gulls (*Larus canus*), which were first seen on the 7th, reached a maximum of 35 in mid-month.

Away from the sea there were 11 Chiffchaffs on January 2nd, a Great grey shrike (*Lanius excubitor*) was seen on the 8th and

a Sky lark (*Alauda arvensis*), Hawfinch (*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*) and 13 Linnets (*Canthis Cannabina*) appeared in mid-month. Robins never exceeded 5 and Starlings were only occasionally seen and usually in small numbers.

The last two weeks of February were warm and sunny and butterflies, which had not been seen since November, were back on the wing. By the end of the month there were hundreds of Small white butterflies (*Pieris* sp.) as well as Brimstones (*Gonepteryx rhamni*), Speckled woods (*Pararge aegeria*), Peacocks (*Inachis io*) and Camberwell beauties (*Nymphalis anio*).

A corvid roost in a huge Plane tree (*Platanus* sp.) in the town which was occupied all Winter, reached a maximum of at least 400 Rooks and 200 Crows at the end of February. It also contained Jackdaws but probably not more than 50 before it was too dark to count.

A pair of Little owls (*Athene noctua*), first seen in December, were mating by 14th February. Chaffinches and Goldfinches, which had been feeding on rough ground earlier in the Winter, moved onto ripening cones in a conifer plantation, here they were joined by small numbers of Bramblings and singing Greenfinches. There were other Winter birds about with Redwings and Song thrushes (*Turdus iliacus*, *T. philomelos*) on the 19th. A week later Stonechats had returned and were singing along with Wood lark (*Lullula arborea*) and Cirl bunting (*Emberiza cirlus*) on the hills. On the 27th a male Sardinian warbler (*Sylvia melanocephala*) sang briefly from the scrub behind the factory hotel and on the 28th, after a night of thunderstorms and a day of heavy rain, a single Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) was seen feeding on the sea front.

Footnote. It is said of March that it comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb. There was a full gale blowing by 5.0 a.m. on the 1st and by noon the heavy rain was changing to snow. By the 2nd at least 5 centimetres of snow had fallen and the cold weather stayed until at least the 5th.

SYRIAN SERINS AND OTHER BULLETIN RECORDS

By Mark Beaman

After going over my field descriptions from Turkey for 1974, prior to submitting some records of unusual species to the Records and Editorial Committee, I have decided that the record of Syrian Serin (*Serinus syriacus*) which appeared in Bull. 13 (P.6) is unsatisfactory and should be withdrawn. The descriptions of the two males seen well do not, I feel, conform in all respects to *syriacus* and may only have been unusually washed-out *serinus*.

This brings me to a reminder that all records published in the Bulletin are unauthenticated by the Records and Editorial Committee and that a number of records which have appeared in the Bulletin have since either been withdrawn at the observers request or have been rejected by the Committee.

This applies to the following records in Bulletins 1-10 (records in Bulls. 11-14 are still under review by the Committee); Mourning Wheatear, Oenanthe lugens, (Bull. 3. p.2), Bonelli's Eagle, Hieraaetus fasciatus, (Bull. 5, p.4; Lanner, Falco biarmicus, (Bull. 5, p.7 and Bull. 8, p.4), Great Northern Diver, Gavia immer, (Bull. 7, p.1). and Eastern Rock Nuthatch, Sitta tephronota, (Bull. 10, p. 8-9). In addition a number of corrections have subsequently been made in the Bird Reports to numbers, dates and other information appearing in the Bulletins. The most important of these corrections in Bulls. 1-10 are as follows:-

1. The record of Subalpine Warblers (Sylvia cantillans) in Bull. 2, (p.2.) should in fact read Sardinian Warblers (Sylvia melanocephalus).
2. The title of the article on the Bosphorus migration in Bull. 8. (p.3) should read "1971" and not "1972."

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The Birds of Afghanistan. Information is being collected for a book or check list on the distribution and status of the birds of Afghanistan. All records are needed (those relating to breeding will be particularly valuable), and any contributions will be acknowledged. Records should be sent to S. C. Madge, 2 Springholme, Caudle Hill, Fairburn, Knottingley, West Yorkshire. WF11 9JQ.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

'The Birds of Libya' - by Graham Bundy - Published by the British Ornithologists Union. A check list covering the 317 species that have occurred in Libya, of which 69 breed regularly; for most of these there is a breeding distribution map. An extremely useful production about a little known region ornithologically.
Obtainable from B.O.U. c/o Zoological Society, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY. (Price £3.00)

'The Birds of Iran' - by D. A. Scott, H.M. Hamadani and A. A. Mirhosseini.

This is the first publication of the Department of the Environment in Iran; two others in the pipeline will cover the mammals and reptiles. Though written in the Persian language and therefore not of great benefit to the foreign reader, there are some useful colour illustrations (many reprinted from other field guides) and an excellent series of breeding distribution maps. The Department is to be congratulated on producing a book aimed at encouraging a wider interest in wildlife amongst people of Iran. The price is U.S. \$11.00, and the book may be obtained from The Publication Office, Department of the Environment, P.O. Box 1430, Tehran, Iran.